

The 8-Fold Path in Practical Terms

by Venerable (Bhante) U Vimalaramsi

There are actually many different ways and levels to talk about the 8-Fold Path which is the most important facet of the Buddha's Teachings, when seen in Dependent Origination. The way we need to discuss this is through the applied aspects of doing the meditation and using a much deeper but still a very practical approach to understanding how the 8-Fold Path works.

The normal ways of thinking about the 8-Fold Path are:

Right View
Right Thought
Right Speech
Right Action
Right Livelihood
Right Effort
Right Mindfulness
Right Concentration.

They are commonly put into three categories Wisdom (Pañña), Morality (Sīla) and Concentration (Samādhi). But actually all of this is only the surface way of looking at this. The explanation about this path that will be discussed here is a much deeper way that relates directly to one's observations of Dependent Origination.

In order to present a little different way of looking at this, things have been changed a bit, so it will become easier to understand. The reason is, when this Path is broken into three categories, the middle category (sīla) is most often forgotten about. This is because morality (sīla) when looked at this way doesn't really seem to have anything to do with one's meditation practice. This kind of dividing up of the 8-Fold Path can effectively change it to a 5-fold Path. This kind of surface interpretation doesn't tend to help or deepen one's own personal investigation and understanding of the Dhamma!

When the changes in both words and meaning are shown and explained it will become clearer. The reason that this is done is because this 8-Fold Path is so important that the Buddha included it in the very first discourse that he gave, The Dhammacakkappattana Sutta (The Turning of the Wheel of Dhamma). He was teaching the first 5 ascetics about the correct way to practice meditation, and was showing how his understanding of the Dhamma was different from other teachings. As it says in many suttas The Dhamma is well expounded by the Buddha, it is immediately effective, has the invitation to come and see, which leads to final liberation here and now.

What this says is that this Path to the cessation of suffering, is still an experience that can happen for us today, when one practices the original teachings of the Buddha closely. This wonderful Path to the cessation of suffering has 8 parts and they must all be practiced at the same time while one is doing their meditation. So every part of the 8-Fold Path has a practical aspect to it and teaches us about understanding how to let go of the suffering talked about in the Noble Truths.

With that said, Let us take a look at the 8-Fold Path in a little different way. For one thing the word Right seems to be a little hard for our purposes of understanding. So the author chooses to use the word "Harmonious", instead of "Right". This tends to put a softer approach to the actual practice of meditation. If one uses the word "Right", it automatically brings to mind the opposite which is wrong! This tends to make one's mind see things in black or white and nothing in between. And the word "Harmonious" doesn't seem to do this, it gives a more fluid kind of feeling to all of these different aspects of the 8-fold Path. A question that the truth seeker can ask oneself as they live their life is, "Am I really being in harmony with what is happening in the present moment right now?" This kind of question can help one to remember to stay of the Path that leads to the cessation of all suffering (The 8-Fold Path). They are:

Harmonious Perspective or Right View (Understanding)

Harmonious Imaging or Right Thought

Harmonious Communication or Right Speech

Harmonious Movement or Right Action

Harmonious Life Style or Right Livelihood

Harmonious Practice or Right Effort

Harmonious Observation or Right Mindfulness

Harmonious Collectedness or Right Concentration

NOTE: I will put the standard way of "Right _____" behind most of these as we go along.

"SAMMA DIṬṬHI" - Harmonious Perspective (Right View): The reason that this is at the beginning of the 8-Fold Path, is because it sets the tone of the impersonal aspects of the entire Path. This Harmonious Perspective (Right View) is talking about the perspective of everything that arises as being an impersonal process (anatta) to be observed. When one is out of harmony with the present moment (Dhamma or Truth), we are taking whatever arises personally (atta) and then there is the personal want to control all thoughts and sensations when they arise. This is where the craving begins to arise, and craving always shows itself as being a tightness or tension in both mind and body (please remember that the tightness or tension in one's head is a part of body and needs to be relaxed also).

At that time, one tries to make these phenomena be the way we want them to be. Anytime one tries to fight or control the Dhamma (Truth) of the present moment, anytime one tries to change the Dhamma (Truth) of the present moment, anytime one tries to make the Dhamma (Truth) of the present moment be any way other than it actually is, it is the cause of great pain and suffering! This is the "First Noble Truth, Suffering" or being out of harmony with our perspective of the present moment, then we are taking everything that arises as being the part of an "I", "Me", "Mine" (atta) perspective.

Why does suffering occur? Because of the unharmonious perspective of " 'I want' things to be, the way 'I want' them to be, when 'I want' them this way!" This "I", "Me", "Mine" concept or perspective (atta) is the very problem to be seen, let go of, and relaxed - in all movements or shifts of mind's attention from one thing to another. As one begins to understand that all phenomena (Mentality/Materiality, Nāma-Rūpa) that arise (anicca), are a part of an impersonal (anatta) process to be observed, let go of and relaxed. Then one will be more able to see the slight tightnesses or tensions (or movement of mind's attention) caused by taking things personally.

The relaxing talked about when one is doing the breath meditation and the understanding that this same tightness is how one recognizes all six kinds of craving (Taṇhā, the craving at each sense door). This is where the very first part of the unharmonious perspective (Wrong View) or being out of harmony with the true nature of the impersonal perspective in all movements and even vibrations that arise in mind's attention moment-to-moment occurs. When one develops a Harmonious Perspective (Right View) they let go of this kind of personal attitude, by seeing through the eyes of the impersonal nature of everything that arises in the present moment.

When the meditator takes anything as being "I", "Me", "Mine" personally, at that time, we are not able to see or understand any of the Noble Truths. Why? Because the craving (I like it...I don't like it, mind) and clinging (the stories that go along with the opinions, concepts, and the false idea of a personal self, papañca) have clouded our perspective. This is the way mind pushes us around and makes us think that every "problem" that arises through our daily lives is an emergency and such a big problem that it seems insurmountable.

This deluded mind brings up all kinds of dissatisfaction and even depression. The way modern society works these days is, if one can't see exactly how mind works. One takes everything that arises as being "mine" personally and then suffers a lot because, "I want to control this feeling with 'my' thoughts" and when one finds out this approach doesn't work - one takes drugs and/or alcohol to get relief from these pains and sufferings. Instead of looking at the deeper aspects of HOW mind's attention occurs and how to change one's perspective from "I am this" (the false personal belief) to "It's only this" (the impersonal observation which is easy to let go of and relax).

The first step of the 8-fold path is really the key that unlocks the suffering! That is the deep realization that everything that arises is simply a part of an impersonal process which can be seen most clearly through the letting go of craving (by relaxing) and seeing all movements or shifts of mind as being a part of the Dukkha! The rest of this path shows us how to do this, also.

"SAMMA SAṄKAPPA" - Harmonious Imaging (or Right Thought): This is the part of mind that works in images. These images can be thoughts, feelings, or pictures. **Harmonious Imaging (Right Thought)** is the consciously taking of an idea or feeling then making it recognizable and easily translated by mind. For example, when a meditator is practicing "Loving-Kindness Meditation" the instructions are to bring up a feeling of happiness, joy, calmness, etc. and feel that image. This is consciously replacing an unwholesome image (Wrong Thought) such as fear, anxiety, depression, sadness etc. that is currently present. Then one substitutes that unwholesome image (Wrong Thought) with a wholesome image like happiness, joy, calmness, peace, total acceptance or any other uplifting image that one can think of. Now one is purposefully feeling that wholesome,

uplifting image.

If one consciously brings up a wholesome thought or image like happiness or joy - they are training themselves to develop **Harmonious Imaging** (Right Thought). In the Majjhima Nikaya Sutta # 19 it says "Whatever one frequently thinks and ponders on, this is the inclination of their mind!"

It is necessary to develop the skill of consciously manifesting a wholesome image of happiness and peace in one form or another so happiness, joy and relief will be present in all of our activities. When one is practicing the breathing and relaxing meditation any distraction that pulls one's attention away from the object of meditation, like lust, aversion, restlessness, etc. is considered to be a type of unwholesome image. The letting go of that **unharmonious image** (Wrong Thought) and relaxing, then redirecting mind back to the breath and relaxing is considered to be developing **Harmonious Imaging** (Right Thought) with a wholesome object of meditation. Why? Because they are seen and acted on, in an impersonal way (**Harmonious Perspective** – Right View, Anatta)

On the other hand, if one unconsciously has the image of dissatisfaction, sadness, anxiety, frustration, worry, criticism, pride, fear, or anger etc. they are indulging in the **Unharmonious Imaging** (Wrong Thought) which leads to suffering and pain. Being out of harmony with an image that one holds on to causes us to want to control and to fight with what is in the present moment. This pulls us away from the present moment and we begin to think of all of the reasons that we don't like that image. This is how craving and clinging to the false idea of a self or atta identification (unharmonious perspective) arises. These images lead us to lots of suffering and dissatisfaction, in the present moment.

As stated earlier anytime one takes an image, of what arises in the present moment to be "I", "Me", "Mine" personally, they will try to control it, fight with it, and force the present moment to be anything other than it is, this is the cause of our pain and dissatisfaction (Dukkha). When a meditator notices this habit of indulging in unharmonious images (wrong thought - feelings, opinions, thoughts, emotions, etc. that are identified with as being mine personally - atta) and they are able to gently relax and let go of that image and then softly replace it with a **harmonious image** (right thought), they are following the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. Again, this can be a way of thinking, feeling or conceptual opinions. Letting go of those things that we take personally, then relaxing and substituting them with an uplifting image leads one to a clear perspective (**Harmonious Perspective**) of how mind works – it is being in harmony with the present moment that has no suffering in it. This is how the first two parts of the 8-fold path interact with each other.

"SAMMA VACA" - Harmonious Communication (Right Speech): This has to do with the gentle communication with ourselves (internal dialogue) as well as with other people too. This helps us to easily let go of and relax into any type of disturbing thoughts, feelings, or emotions that can pull mind's attention away from the meditation object (which for practical purposes we can say is the breath, relaxing and smiling or metta, relaxing and smiling). Any kind of self-criticism, or any kind of anger, dislike, worry, anxiety, dissatisfaction, condemnation, or a want to "make things be the way 'I' want them to be" in our communication with ourselves (our internal dialogue, for example, anger with oneself, criticism with oneself, dislike of our own actions and thoughts) and others is being out of harmony (Wrong Speech) with the present moment.

This leads to a personal belief that all thoughts, opinions and concepts are "I", "Me", "Mine" (atta –Wrong View) and leads to excessive clinging or thinking about. Being out of harmony with our own communications leads us to a hard mind toward ourselves and everyone around us. This definitely leads us to being out of harmony with any external communication with other people. The practice of mental development is learning how to lovingly-accept whatever arises in the present moment and communicating this acceptance to ourselves and others. Or we could say that one of the things we need to practice is loving the person we are with and speaking with that love. But who do we spend most of our time with? That's right, we spend more time with ourselves than we do with any other person, so we really need to practice being loving and kind to ourselves, as much as possible. The Buddha said, "Anyone who truly loves themselves will never harm another person". This is how we can carry a smile around with us all of the time. So smile and be happy then cultivate those thoughts and communicate this happiness with yourself internally as well as externally to other people! Especially, with the love and acceptance of ourselves about ourselves.

"SAMMA KAMMANTA" - Harmonious Movement (or Right Action): This is very important when one is learning how to meditate! Seeing the movements of how mind's attention goes from one thing to another is what meditation is all about! Why? Because when one trains their observation powers (Right Mindfulness) they begin to see clearly exactly how mind's attention goes from being on the breath and relaxing to a sound, sight, taste, smell, touch or thought. This is clearly observing exactly how the movements of mind's attention is seeing the process of Dependent Origination and how it occurs. Being in harmony with this, is the way of seeing the impersonal nature of all of these slight movements and processes. The more interest one puts into watching how

mind's attention occurs the more precise one's understanding becomes. This observation of how mind's attention works is especially helpful in letting go and relaxing when one has a hindrance (Nīvaraṇa) arise.

When a meditator doesn't like or doesn't see the way mind moves and tries to control how this movement occurs they are experiencing unharmonious movement (or wrong action). For instance, when a hindrance (Nīvaraṇa) arises like restlessness, when the meditator tries to push the hindrance away or to stop the hindrance from being in the present moment, this trying to stop mind's movements is what we can call **Unharmonious Movement** (Wrong action). Or if a meditator tries to stop or suppress mind's natural movements by practicing one-pointed concentration (this includes moment-to-moment concentration – Khanika Samadhi, access concentration – Upacara Samadhi, and full absorption or ecstatic concentration – Appana Samadhi all of these types of concentration are considered to be different forms of one-pointed concentration), the force of that concentration will temporarily stop mind's moving for a short period of time. But when the one-pointed concentration meditator loses their strong concentration, then the movements of mind's attention tends to become stronger. This is how **unharmonious perspectives** (Wrong View), **unharmonious images** (Wrong Thoughts), and **unharmonious communications** (Wrong Speech), in one's daily activities arises which can cause huge amounts of suffering and dissatisfaction (Dukkha). This is where true self-responsibility for our own actions can really be seen! Seeing exactly how mind's attention moves from one object to another takes interest, and precision. Watching these slight movements of mind's attention is the thing that makes meditation so incredibly interesting and fun to observe.

"SAMMA ĀJĪVA" - Harmonious Lifestyle (or Right Livelihood): This has always been a curious part of the 8-Fold Path. The standard way of describing this has been not to kill living beings on purpose, not to sell poisons or weapons, and not to deal in slavery and selling human beings. But how does this relate directly to one's meditation practice? If it is important enough to be put in the 8-Fold Path, then there must be more to it that leads to the cessation of suffering. Don't you agree? These above things do give us this idea of Right Livelihood (**Harmonious Lifestyle**)- in a general way, but just how does **Harmonious Lifestyle** ("Right Livelihood") relate to our true understanding and practice? An interesting question, isn't it? And it becomes even more interesting when we consider that the Buddha gave these instructions with the very first discourse that he gave to the Five Ascetics and he was showing them about the direct experience of meditation practice. These ascetics surely did not kill living beings, they didn't sell poisons or weapons, or sell slaves – so what was the Buddha actually talking about when he mentioned **Harmonious Lifestyle** (Right Livelihood)?

When we take a look at mental development through the eyes of **Harmonious Lifestyle** (Right Livelihood), it may make a little more sense. For instance, **Harmonious Lifestyle** (Right Livelihood) means how we practice our observation (**Harmonious Observation** Right Mindfulness) and meditation of the present moment during all of the times that we are not doing our sitting meditation (in other words our daily activities). We are practicing being in harmony with a mind that is alert, calm, joyful and uplifted (**Harmonious Movement and Harmonious Communication** or Right Action and Right speech with ourselves -a short note this is why I encourage students to smile whether doing their sitting meditation or their daily activities). The trick is seeing how, when things are not going the "way I want them to" and mind becomes heavy with emotional issues (**Unharmonious Movement** or Wrong Action) – how the observation of how minds attention becomes weak and the subtle "I like it, I don't like it" and thinking unwholesome thoughts (craving and clinging – **unharmonious Communication** or wrong speech) causes us even more suffering.

In other words, having a **Harmonious Lifestyle** (Right Livelihood) means that we learn to carry the meditation (**Harmonious Observation, Harmonious Communication, Harmonious Imaging, Harmonious Perspective, Harmonious Practice, Harmonious Collectedness and Harmonious Movement** in other words the entire 8-Fold Path) with us all of the time, in our daily activities. In this way, we then truly begin to understand that the impersonal process of Dependent Origination (**Harmonious Perspective**) is in everything that arises. Having a **Harmonious Lifestyle** (Right Livelihood) is having an uplifted happy mind that is smiling, joyful, alert and free from unwholesome thoughts, or feelings.

The emotions that are heavy and tend to pull mind away from the present moment, are the cause of suffering. Why? Because the meditator tends to take these thoughts and feelings personally, with the wrong perspective of "I am That" attitude. This personal perspective (wrong life style) in our daily lives is the reason that so many people suffer so much! Also, too many times when someone does a meditation retreat, the meditator gets very serious and heavy in mind without really recognizing it. The heavy distracted **Unharmonious Lifestyle** (wrong Livelihood) is the mind that is being caught by the personal (atta) belief (**Unharmonious Perspective**). They become distracted by opinions, concepts, thoughts, daydreaming and the general dissatisfactions of life. Or we can say that whenever mind has heavy emotional states in it, this is considered to be **Unharmonious Lifestyle** (Wrong Livelihood). This is the mind that is out of balance and gravitates toward unhappiness and suffering. When one is practicing the **Harmonious Lifestyle** (Right Livelihood) it makes all meditation and life a continuous flow of happiness that leads us toward the cessation of suffering. In this way, "Meditation is Life,

Life is Meditation"!

"**SAMMA VĀYĀMA**" - **Harmonious Practice** (Right Effort): Now we come to another aspect of the 8-Fold Path that is quite important. One of the best descriptions of **Harmonious Practice**(Right Effort) is:

When a person recognizes that their mind's attention has become distracted, by a thought, feeling, or sensation - this is the first part of **Harmonious Practice** (Right Effort).

Next one lets go of the distraction and relaxes the tightness or tension in both their mind and body, then they smile! The diversion away from one's meditation object is a movement of mind's attention toward a distraction (Nivāraṇa) and away from one's breath and relaxing or metta. This is the cause of the tightness or tension (Craving) to arise. This happens every time mind's attention gets pulled away and this causes craving (Taṇhā), clinging (Upādāna) and our habitual tendency (Bhava) to arise. (These are three very important parts of Dependent Origination to be recognized and observed closely) The Habitual Tendency (Bhava) always re-acts in the same way when this sort of distraction arises. The more one sees clearly how these different aspects of Dependent Origination occur the easier it is to let them go. This is a part of the way that leads to the cessation of suffering!

The letting go, relaxing, and smiling is the second part of the **Harmonious Practice** (Right Effort). The term letting go means that the person no longer keeps their mind's attention on that distraction, so to be even more precise we can say letting the distraction be there without giving it any more of mind's attention.

Next, the person gently redirects mind's smiling attention back to the object of meditation (the Breath and relaxing or Metta and relaxing) - this is the third part of **Harmonious Practice** (Right Effort).

Then the person stays on the meditation object and smiles for as long as they can, naturally, which is the last part of the **Harmonious Practice** (Right Effort).

Over the years, I have developed a very effective way of remembering how to do this practice - it is called the "6R's" that is:

To **Recognize** – that mind has become distracted away from the object of meditation;

To **Release** - or let go of, or let distraction be without keeping mind's attention on it;

To **Relax** - the tightness or tension caused by that distraction, this means to let go of the craving caused by that distraction;

To **RE-SMILE** - to bring a light mind that is very alert, and calm to the meditation object;

To **RETURN** - mind's joyful attention back to the meditation object (the breath and relaxing or Metta and relaxing);

To **REPEAT** - the task of staying with the meditation object, relaxing, and smiling. The smile is actually a very good tool to help mind stay uplifted and with the enlightenment factor of joy in one's mind, every movement of mind's attention is seen very quickly and clearly.

That is to:

RECOGNIZE;

RELEASE;

RELAX;

RE-SMILE;

RETURN;

REPEAT.

These words do not have to be said internally to oneself. They are just a reminder to let go of any distraction

that pulls mind's attention away from the object of meditation and it tells how to come back to the meditation object with a happy mind that has no craving or clinging in it. In other words how to purify one's mind of all kind's of troubles, cravings, and fetters.

"SAMMA SATI" – Harmonious Observation (Right Mindfulness): This part of the 8-Fold Path has been spoken about in very general terms. The definition of Mindfulness (Sati) has never been very clear! This is one of those words that everyone is supposed to know, but few people actually do. Many teachers today will give the definition of Mindfulness by saying "Just be mindful". Another definition that has been used is to "remember, to remember, to remember", which sounds great but has very little meaning. Now what is all of this supposed to mean? We really need to understand that this important word must have a clear and understandable definition.

So the author will attempt to give a working definition that works all of the time in every situation. **Harmonious Observation (Right Mindfulness)** means: "To remember to recognize and release any distraction that pulls one's attention away from their meditation object, in the present moment". This means to remember to observe whatever arises in the present moment, let it be and to see the impersonal nature in all of these phenomena (**Harmonious Perspective – Right View**). This is remembering to clearly observe how mind's attention moves (**Harmonious Movement**) from one thing to another, then remembering to let go and let the **Harmonious Practice (Right Effort)** do its work.

"SAMMA SAMĀDHI" – Harmonious Collectedness – (Right Concentration):

Now we come to the part of the 8-Fold Path that has many different interpretations and many different ideas attached to it. The confusion starts when one takes what some of the commentaries say and then place so much emphasis on them. Again, some commentaries are good and very useful and some don't agree so well with the original teachings of the Buddha. The way to know for yourself whether a commentary is good to use or not is by comparing what is said with the suttas (discourses) and vinaya (rules of discipline). If they agree with the suttas and vinaya then one can be reasonably sure that these commentaries are reliable. But when a commentary that divides up the practice into many separate pieces and tends to make things very difficult to understand and practice, then it may be a good idea to let that kind of commentary stay on the book shelf and be used as a reference book, instead of a main book to follow. (note* it is a good idea to use more than one sutta for comparing, in that way when many suttas seem to agree then you can be reasonably sure that this is the Buddha's Teachings)

Here is something very interesting about the words insight and serenity (Vipassanā/Samatha. When we go to the Majjhima Nikāya (The second edition of Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation from Wisdom Publications) and look up in the "index of subjects" the words "insight and serenity" we will see a striking similarity that shows that both of these words are used together, almost ALWAYS!!!

On page 1397 the word "insight" is mentioned and has many suttas to go to for reference, here are a few suttas so you can compare them- 6.3, 32.5, 43.14, 73.18, 77.29, 149.10, 151.19. Then we go to the word "serenity" on page 1404 and these sutta references are 6.3, 32.5, 43.14, 73.18, 77.29, 149.10, 151.19. Do you see the similarities in the numbers of the suttas and even the sections that they are being used in? The point being that serenity and insight are almost always mentioned together and this gives us a clue that they are (as it says in sutta 149.10) yoked together. This means that the Buddha was talking about one type of meditation practice that includes both serenity and insight (Samatha/Vipassana) together, at the same time! Also, this means that the jhāna which is so often mentioned in the suttas, is a very specific type of meditation level. Why? Because the kind of jhāna that the Buddha taught us is a Samatha/Vipassanā jhāna. It is not to be confused with the ecstatic, or absorption type of one-pointed concentration jhāna, which is mostly being taught today.

The dividing up of "Samatha" and "Vipassanā" into two separate types of meditation tends to make the meditations quite complicated and one's progress seems to take a very long time. Which goes against one of the things that describes the brilliance of the Dhamma. That is, the explanation that the Buddha's Teachings are "immediately effective". When a meditator adds that one extra step of relaxing and letting go of the craving, their progress in understanding and personality development and one's entire attitude toward all life seems to improve greatly and reasonably quickly! In the Dhammapada the Buddha said: "We are the Happy Ones!" and this is what happens when the meditator follows the instruction in meditation precisely and they relax then smile, often.

Now, the importance of practicing Samatha/Vipassana meditation in exactly the same way as the suttas tells us to do, can't be overstated! Why? Because if we don't add the extra step of relaxing (letting go of craving) one's mind and body on the in-breath and relaxing on the out-breath ones meditation changes from being a Samatha/Vipassana type of meditation to a one-pointed type of concentration. And because they are not exactly the same practice they tend to have different end results. The one-pointed concentration when used suppresses

the Hindrances (Nīvaraṇa) by the force of the concentration (This includes access concentration Upacāra Samadhi, as well as absorption concentration – Appaṇā Samadhi). The hindrances (Nīvaraṇa) are where our attachments to a personal self are stored. When one practices one-pointedness concentration and the force of one's concentration pushes down a hindrance, it is not considered to be purifying one's mind in the same way as the Buddha taught us to practice. Anything that is suppressed is not let go of, but is stopped from arising while the strong concentration is present. And the suppressed hindrance has a real tendency to arise, even more strongly, when one's one-pointed concentration weakens. With the practice Samatha/Vipassanā or the letting go and then relaxing, over time the hindrance (Nīvaraṇa) will fade away never to arise again. The Samatha/Vipassanā is the way to actually purify one's mind.

The Brahmins during the time of the Buddha and after his death were continually working to change the meditation so it agreed with their philosophies and concepts. They took up using the word Jhana and gave it their own definitions which basically meant one-pointed concentration and they conveniently left out the one step that changes the entire meditation from one-pointed concentration to Serenity/Insight (Samatha/Vipassanā) meditation. Also, they took some of the most popular words and gave them different meanings just to confuse the issues. For example the word "Samadhi" was never used before the time of the Buddha, he made this word up to describe Samatha/Vipassanā meditation which when practiced in the way he describes it in the instructions lead directly to Nibbāna! Of course during the time of the Buddha there were many words in Sanskrit to describe one-pointed concentration and this type of meditation went along very nicely with the Brahmin ways of practice.

This extra step of relaxing when added to one's meditation practice is the way to recognize and let go of Craving (Taṇhā). This is why it is so important and is specifically mentioned in so many suttas. When we see that all of the Noble Truths are about letting go of Craving and relaxing of the tightness or tension in one's body and mind, it only makes sense to relax or tranquilize often, don't you agree? It does seem to make sense to let go of craving as much as possible because it is the origin of suffering!

When the Buddha came along and chose a different word to use to describe Samatha/Vipassanā (Samma Samadhi or Harmonious Collectedness), the Brahmins began to use this word "Samadhi" with their own definition of one-pointed concentration which effectively divided the meditation of Samatha/Vipassanā and made it into two separate meditation practices, that is Samatha meditation and Vipassana meditation. Because this was taken to be the way of meditation about 1,000 years after the Buddha's death (in some commentaries) the success in meditation and experiencing Nibbāna began to fade away. Many different schools of thought began to philosophically argue about what was the correct way of practice – but as you know philosophy is the use of words without any action, and this began to change the whole way of looking at the Buddha's Teachings.

With that said, let us take a look at **Harmonious Collectedness** (Right Concentration), in the texts it mentions often that this part of the 8-Fold Path is the experiencing at least one if not all of the (Samatha/Vipassana) jhānas. I am going to add the type of jhāna one experiences to each of these jhānas. The reason that I include the type of jhāna is so that there is no confusion about just what the Buddha taught as far as the jhāna is concerned.

The first (Samatha/Vipassanā) Jhāna

The second (Samatha/Vipassanā) Jhāna

The third (Samatha/Vipassanā) Jhāna

The fourth (Samatha/Vipassanā) Jhāna.

The immaterial Jhānas (Arūpa Jhāna) are included in the fourth jhāna as they are different aspects of the deep equanimity found in the fourth jhāna.

Nowhere in the suttas does it say anything about the practice of Upācāra Samadhi – Access or Neighborhood Concentration or Moment-to-moment concentration or Khaṇika Samadhi. These are only mentioned in the Theravada commentaries. And don't seem to agree with what the Suttas and vinaya say about the way to attain the full understanding of how dependent Origination or the 4 Noble Truths actually occurs.

As you can see as we go along the 8-Fold Path these different factors are interwoven and are not separate parts to be taken apart and used. The entire 8-Fold Path works together as an interconnected whole process of seeing understanding and letting go of all personal beliefs in a self. In a way, you could see the different parts of the 8-Fold Path like they were separate pieces of a motor. The motor won't run unless all of these parts are put together correctly. When one uses all of the different aspects of the 8-Fold Path, at the same time it is the way of

making this Path a good working tool. Separately these parts may work to a limited degree but when they are all incorporated into the 8-Fold Path at the same time it works so well that Nibbāna can arise, even today! The letting go of craving (the weak link in this process, as stated earlier that this is done by relaxing the tightness or tension in mind and body) is the starting point to the cessation of suffering and this Path shows us exactly how to do this. The simple explanation given in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta tells us to relax on the in-breath and to relax on the out-breath, **this simple act of relaxing both mind and body is following the entire 8-Fold Path all at exactly the same time** and this is the key to unlocking the door to the deathless.

Every time mind has even the slightest movement in it the craving is the cause of this. So whenever the meditator relaxes and lets go of the tightness caused by this slight movement – they are purifying their mind and this leads directly to the final cessation of all suffering! In other words, the Path that leads to the Cessation of suffering is none other than this very 8-Fold Path when it is used and practiced often!